

Geotourism in Alashtar, North Lorestan, Iran

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ABSTRACT: Having a unique and magnificent historical and cultural resources, Lorestan province, located in the west of Iran, is one of the most important tourist centers in the world. In addition to these resources, beautiful landscapes and the unique morphological features of the lands, the diversity of fauna, flora, as well as the diversity of the culture of the people living in this area, are all important factors that are increasingly attracting tourists annually. Preserving these valuable natural resources of the area, especially the unique geological phenomenon, which is the result of millions of year changes in the Earth, demands substantial regional and international programs and initiatives. In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, this article attempts to introduce some fascinating geotourist features of Alashtar (Lorestan), and show the capability and potentiality of the region to be registered as Geo-park in UNESCO. Due to the high number of tourists in Lorestan province and some of its world-renowned historical monuments, introducing some of this area as geopark and registering them in UNESCO, along with the valuable ancient artifacts, can attract more tourists to the region.

Keywords: Lorestan Province, Alashtar, sustainable development, geopark, tourism, geotourism

INTRODUCTION

Due to its archaeological and natural attractions, Iran is among the top ten countries of the world in terms of tourist attractions. The beauty of this country does not belong to a specific spot; there are numerous God-given attractive spots all over this ancient country. One of these beautiful regions is Lorestan province, which is located at the west of Iran. Since it is located amongst three structural zones – Sanandaj-Sirjan in the east, Rugged Zagros in the west, and the High Zagros, which is located between these two -, Lorestan province enjoys the merit of different geomorphology and climate. Lorestan can be described as a land of valleys, waterfalls, rivers, oak forests and other tourist attractions in the Zagros. Kahman and Gareen areas, as examples of tourist attraction, are undoubtedly the most popular tourist attractions in Lorestan province. These areas are located in Alashtar (Selseleh), in the north of Lorestan province. The name has been derived from the river with the same name which flows in Dartang Valley. Kahman River is the main stream of Kashkan River, which is itself the most important river in Lorestan Province. Kahman river is also the main drinking water of Alashtar. Due to its special climatic characteristics, it is the coolest region of Lorestan at summers.

1: Satellite image of the position of the studied area (Alashtar)

The studied area

Geographically, the city is located at 48 degrees 15 minutes east longitude and 31 degrees 51 minutes north latitude. Its height is 1600 meters above sea level and has a temperate climate. Alashtar is located 45 km to the center of the Lorestan province namely Khorramabad. Kahman is located in 15 kilometers from the north of Alashtar, in the mountain range Gareen (Fig. 1). The beautiful valleys and springs of the region as well as Kahman River attract many

Figure

tourists from all over Iran and even outside of the country to this paradise (Figure 2).

Geologically, Kahman area is part of the High Zagros, and its valleys are formed from the erosion of the Cretaceous formation. Among the Cretaceous formations, the collection of the red radiolarites ophiolitic of Kermanshah also faults are widespread and have been eroded.

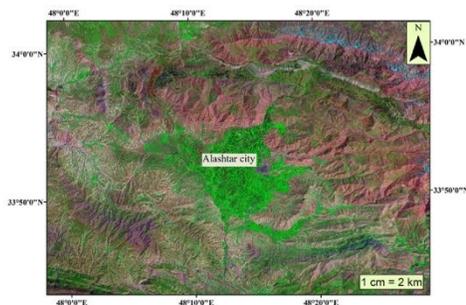


Figure1.



Figure 2. The road to the entrance of the studied area and the visitors' cars



Figure 3. A view of the Green Mountains in spring; view to the north



Figure 4. A view of the Green Mountains in summer



Figure 5. Sarab Khaso Springs; view to the southeast

DISCUSSION

In this section, it will be attempted to discuss the most attractive tourist spots of the region

Green Mountain

The term "Green" has been derived from Pahlavi word "Geriva" meaning rigid stack and impenetrable mountain (Kazemian Mir, M. S., 2006). The mountain extends from east to the north of Alashtar, which is part of the High Zagros; its highest peak with an altitude is 3500 meter above the sea level is Kooloo (Kiani, M., et. Al. 2009). In this mountain, which is the highest peak of the province after Oshtorankoo, lays many glaciers.

The mountain, which is part of the High Zagros, has been formed in the late orogenic phase Laramyd 65 million years ago; hence belongs to young Alpine. The spring water of Kahman Valley comes from melting snow and ice that cover the mountains (Fig. 3 and 4). In these pictures, one can see Dartang valley; on the hillside of Green.

Khaso Spring

In Laki language, "Khas" means good, and "Khaso" means good men. This fountain is located in the eastern part of Kahman River. This spring, which is the spring of a fault, with its cool swollen water, is the main source of the

Kahman River. What that makes its beauty more appealing is the way that it flows under shadows of centuries-old walnut trees (Fig. 5). In this image, the fountain flows towards the west and joins Kahman River.



Figure 6. 3-foot diameter water outlet of Takhte-Shah Spring

Tkhte-Shah Spring

The name of the fountain is due to the flat land on the top of the spring. The spring is located at the north end of Kahman valley. This fountain together with Khaso Spring provides the most part of Kahman River. The spring water outlet reaches to three meters in diameter (Figure 6). From the spring comes out a lot of cool water. In the past, it was believed that due to the coldness of the water, one cannot dip his hands into its water, bring out eleven pebbles and count them: it is, of course, only a saying implying the coldness of the water

Kahman River



Figure 7. Kahman River; view to the North



Figure 8. Kahman River; view to the North



Figure 9. Kahman River; view to the South



Figure 10. walnut trees along Kahman River; view to the South

The word Kahman has multiple meanings. However, the most plausible meaning comes from the combination of two Laki (Persian Pahlavi) words, “kæh” meaning king, and “män” meaning coming have been combined to mean “the kings who are coming” (Kazemian Mir, M. S., 2006).



Figure 12. walnut trees along Kahman River; view to the South



Figure 11. Kahman River; view to the South

The primary sources of Kahman River include Takhte-Shah spring and adjacent springs that flow into Kahman Valley. While running in the valley, Khaso spring and other springs join together to form Kahman River. The river is also home to rainbow trout. Along the river, old walnut and willow trees have grown and created a paradise shade on the river. In some areas, the heavy rush of the river makes it impossible to cross (Fig. 7 to 12).

Vegetation

In Kahman area, there are a lot of different species of plants and trees including walnut, plum, quince, pear, hawthorn, blackberries, wild pistachio, and oak trees.



Figure 13. walnut trees beside the wheat field: view to NW



Figure 14. Walnut trees of the area; view to the West

Moreover, there are a lot of agricultural lands in the valley in which a variety of crops, especially cucumbers, are cultivated (Kayani, Karim, 2012). The diameter of some of the walnut trees in the valley reaches to several meters. The trees are now in the ownership of local people who are annually preparing the required butternut required of Lorestan and other provinces of Iran (Figure 13 and 14).

Darvazeh Valley

In Laki or Pahlavi language, the word “Darvazeh” means “Entrance” or “Gateway”; its appellation is due to the fact that the valley is an entrance to Gareen Mountain (Kazemian Mir, M. S., 2006). The valley which is located in the Eastern part of Dartang Valley has formerly been the main route to Damavand.



Figure 16. Darvazeh Waterfall (with a height of 10 meters)



Figure 15. Darvazeh Valley; view to the North

Within the valley, alongside the springs, the soaring centuries-old plane trees are grown. Around 500 meters above the north of the plane trees, there is an eye-catching 10- meters- height waterfall called Darvazeh waterfall. The waterfall's main water is supplied by the ice and snow of Gareen Mountain (photos 15 and 16).

Honam Landslide

The landslide is located in the south of the city in an area above Honam Agriculture high school (Kazemian Mir, M. S., 2006). Due to the landslide, Oligocene limestone on the north ridge of Mount Darikonan, large volumes of rock and soil has been transported downward to a nearby school. At the top of the mountain, one of the biggest landslides in Lorestan province has been created in which the mass movement has formed a few square kilometers of plain. In the middle of the plain, there is a water hole that waters the plain. As the field evidences show, the age of the landslide probably dates back to Kvatrnrmymy period (Figure 17).

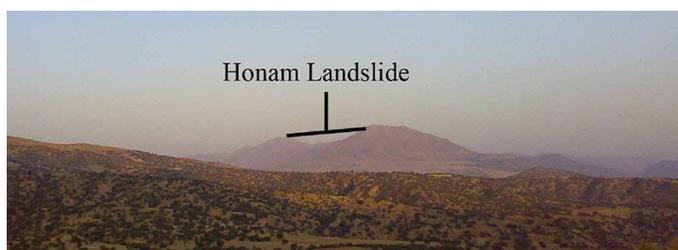


Figure 17. Honam Landslide; view to the East, from a distance of 7 km

CONCLUSION

Although regarding natural and cultural attractions, Iran is among 10 top fascinating countries of the world in tourism, due to the lack of appropriate management, and inefficient advertising in media propaganda, it has failed to meet the economic and cultural benefits of the global industry of tourism. Due to Kahman's potential geo-tourism attractions described in this study and selected photographs of the area, it is recommended that Geological Survey of Iran (GSI) in cooperation with Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Geological Society, national and international as well as provincial and local institutions attempt to spot and show Zagros capabilities with media advertising and create the necessary infrastructure to allow Iran to obtain a significant role in world.

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